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ABSTRACT

These six fact sheets from Child Care Aware are designed to help parents ease their children's transition to child care. The first fact sheet, "Before Your Child's First Day," discusses tips such as: (1) "prepare your child"; (2) read and look at picture books about child care; and (3) "prepare yourself." The second fact sheet, "First Day Tips," offers these tips: (1) plan to spend extra time; (2) plan to stay a while the first several mornings; (3) "plan shorter days for your child to be away from you"; (4) "call if you will be late picking up your child"; (5) try not to be in a rush to go home; and (6) things to remember to take on the first day. The third fact sheet, "Introducing Your Child to the Child Care Provider," suggests: (1) "take your child to visit the new provider"; (2) "invite the new provider to your home"; (3) "spend time in your child's classroom"; and (4) activities especially for children under age 3. The fourth fact sheet, "Helping Your Child Adjust to Child Care," offers this advice: (1) "your child may take several weeks to feel comfortable at a new child care place"; (2) "if your child is between 6 and 12 months old, he or she may begin to cry when you leave"; (3) some children refuse to eat or nap at first; (4) "try not to make any major changes in your child's life"; and (5) ask other parents how they helped their children become used to child care. The fifth fact sheet, "Choosing Someone to Care for Your Child at Home," offers tips such as (1) "choose a person with whom you can talk easily"; (2) "choose a provider who understands and loves your child"; and (3) "choose a provider who keeps your child clean and comfortable". The sixth fact sheet, "When Friends or Relatives Care for Your Child," offers advice such as: (1) "be sure your friend or relative really wants to care for your child"; and (2) "choose a friend or relative with the same good qualities that you would look for in any other kind of child care". Each fact sheet contains suggested readings and references. (EV)

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Beginning Child Care

Child Care Aware

Oklahoma State University

ED 423 980

Before Your Child's First Day

Prepare your child. Talk to your child about what child care will be like. Even if your child is a toddler, children can usually understand clear explanations. Point to the calendar and talk about what days of the week are work days for you and child care days for him or her. Talk about whether he or she will eat and nap there. Your happy positive attitude and calm voice will help your child know this will be a good place to stay.

Read and look at picture books about child care. Some books show and tell about a day in a family child care home or center. Others deal with feelings a child might have about being away from a parent or playing with other children.

Prepare yourself. Learn about quality child care. Call your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office and DHS office to receive materials on child care. These materials can help you find a quality child.care provider that is best for you and your child.

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Read and look at books about child care.

Before the first day:

- Visit the child care program so you can tell your child about it.
- Take your child for a short visit so he or she can see where children play, eat, and nap.
- Invite your child care provider to visit you at home. She or he, you, and your child can get to know each other.
- Invite another child who is in the same program to play with your child. He or she will have at least one "friend" on the first day of child care.

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Children's Books:

- Cohen, M., *Will I Have a Friend?*, New York: Aladdin Books, 1967.
- Conlin, S. and L. Friedman, *Nathan's Day at Preschool*, Seattle: Parent Press Inc., 1991.
- Essenberg, P. E., *You're My Nikki*, New York: Dial Books, 1993.
- Isadora, R., *Friends*, New York: Greenwillow Books, 1990.
- Oxenbury, H., *All Fall Down*, New York: MacMillan, 1987.
- Rogers, F., *Going to Day Care*, Pittsburgh: Family Communications Inc., 1985.
- Tompert, A., *Will You Come Back for Me?*, Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Co., 1985.

Suggested Readings:

- Child Care Aware Packet. To receive this information, contact your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office or DHS office. These offices are often located in the county courthouse.

References:

- Donegan, M. et al., "Making the Transition to Group Care," *Exceptional Parent*, February 1995, pp. 29-31.
- Karges-Bone, L., "How to Deal with Separation Anxiety," *American Baby*, August 1994, pp. 32-34.
- Ogintz, E., "First Days at Day Care: Six Age-by-Age Tips," *Parents*, September 1993, p. 58.
- Reynolds, A. J. "Effects of a Preschool Plus Follow Up Intervention for Children at Risk," *Developmental Psychology*, 30n6, 1994, pp. 787-804.

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First Day Tips

Plan to spend extra time getting to work and child care. Pack your child's supplies the night before so you will not be rushing in the morning. Rushing adds stress and shortens tempers. You want your child to have a happy start to the day. It makes leaving him or her easier for both of you.

Plan to stay a while the first several mornings. Have another person your child knows stay if you cannot. When it is time for you to leave, say good-bye, give a last hug, and leave directly. Your child may cry at first. This is normal. Usually the tears last for a brief time, six to 20 minutes. Check on your child by phone later.

Plan shorter days for your child to be away from you. Pick him or her up after the morning session first, then after lunch, then after nap, and finally have your child stay the whole day. Perhaps a grandparent or friend your child knows well can help if you cannot pick him or her up early.

Call if you will be late picking up your child. Tell your child if you know you will be one of the last parents to pick up your child every day. Your child can learn to look at the clock and know it is not time to go home yet. Suggest the provider play a game, read to, or do a special activity with the last few children.

Pack your child's favorite blanket or stuffed animal.

Try not to be in a rush to go home. Your child may want to show you some things he or she has done. Do not be surprised if your child acts angry or unhappy to see you, or wants to stay longer. Your child is telling you that he or she needs time to get ready to leave. You can show that you think this is a good place to be by

Remember to Take on the First Day:

- Your child's comfort item (blanket or stuffed animal).
- Change of clothing and extra sweater.
- Health forms and immunization records.
- Family picture for his or her cubby or crib.
- Phone number where you can be reached.
- Child care phone number (with you).

Spend time with your child at the child care center or family child care home.

spending time there, talking to the teachers, and visiting with other parents. Meet your child's friends, play with your child for a while, then go home.

Suggested Readings:

- Child Care Aware Packet.
  To receive this information, contact your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office or DHS office. These offices are often located in the county courthouse.

References:

- Domegan, M. et al., "Making the Transition to Group Care," *Exceptional Parent*, February 1995, pp. 29-31.
- Powell, D. R., *Strengthening Parental Contributions to School Readiness and Early School Learning*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center, 1991.

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Introducing Your Child to the Child Care Provider

It takes time for a child to learn to trust a new person. A few careful steps when your child begins child care will help her or him adjust more easily.

Take your child to visit the new provider when there are few children present. The provider will have time to talk with you and your child.

Invite the new provider to your home. You and your child will get to know her or him in familiar surroundings.

Tell your child that the provider will know how to reach you and other relatives or friends. Be sure to tell the provider who will pick up your child. Ask the provider to remind your child how she or he will get home each day.

Take your child to visit the new provider.

Spend time in your child's classroom. Share talents you have, or read a book to some of the children. Go on a field trip with the children. If you cannot help during the day program, ask how else you can be of help. Perhaps you can bring materials for art activities.

Especially for Children Under Three Years Old

- Allow time for your child to warm up slowly to the child care provider during your visit and first few days.
- Avoid handing your child directly to the child care provider.
- Let your child approach the provider when ready.
- Stay seated so your child can be on your lap or lean against you. She or he will need time to look over the provider, room, toys, and other children.
- Place a small table or chair between you and the provider. This barrier helps your child feel safe while getting to know the provider.
- Encourage the provider to play with a toy in which your child might be interested. They will get to know each other as they play with it together.
- Stay until your child is involved with the provider, toys, or other children.

Suggested Readings:

- Child Care Aware Packet. To receive this information, contact your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office or DHS office. These offices are often located in the county courthouse.

References:

- Donegan, M. et al., "Making the Transition to Group Care." *Exceptional Parent*, February 1995, pp. 29-31.
- Elicker, J. & Fortner-Wood, C. Adult-child relationships in early childhood programs. *Young Children*, 51n1, 1995, pp. 69-78.

Tell your child that the provider will know how to reach you.

Prepared by:
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Helping Your Child Adjust to Child Care

Your child may take several weeks to feel comfortable at a new child care place. Spend time with your child during this period. Do not lose patience. Show your child you love him or her by hugging and talking with him or her. Talk about your day at work and your child's day at child care. Let your child know you think of him or her often and that you like to be together at the end of the day.

If your child is between 6 and 12 months old, he or she may begin to cry when you leave. This is normal. Your child is beginning to know how special you are, and he or she misses you. From now on, even as an adult, your child will have these feelings from time to time and may cry when leaving you. If you talk about these feelings with your children, they will learn to manage them as they grow.

Sometimes your child will adjust to child care right away. After several weeks, your child may begin crying when you leave. Again, be patient and talk with him or her. Talk with the child care provider. Together you can help your child feel better.

Show your child you love him.

Some children refuse to eat or nap at first. A loving provider will help your child feel safe and comfortable. Tell the provider about your child and family so she or he can talk with your child about family, home, pets, etc.

Try not to make any major changes in your child's life during this time of adjustment. Potty training or moving to another home may be harder for your child during this time.

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Keep life simple at home. Try to plan ahead so you do not have to rush each morning.

Ask other parents how they helped their children become used to child care. One parent and her son made cookies together for snack. Another parent let his daughter invite a classmate over to play.

Try not to show your unhappiness when your child is slow to adjust. This will make your child more unhappy. Get to know the child care provider and spend time at the program. This will help you both feel more comfortable.

Suggested Readings:

- Child Care Aware Packet.
  To receive this information, contact your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office or DHS office. These offices are often located in the county courthouse.

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References:

- Donegan, M. et al., "Making the Transition to Group Care," *Exceptional Parent*, February 1995, pp. 29-31.
- Fish, M. and J. Belsky, "Temperament and Attachment Revisited: Origin and Meaning of Separation Intolerance at Age Three," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61(3), 1991, pp. 418-427.
- "Getting Your Child Ready for School ... And the School Ready for Your Child," Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators, 1992.
- Lally, R. J. "The Impact of Child Care Policies and Practices on Infant/Toddler Identity Formation," *Young Children*, 51n1, 1995, pp. 58-67.

Get to know the child care provider and spend time at the program.

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Choosing Someone to Care for Your Child at Home

Choose a person with whom you can talk easily. She or he will need to follow your directions about child care. She or he will need to be able to read and write.

Choose a provider who understands and loves your child and shows this by:

- Giving attention to your child.
- Hugging your child.
- Using a gentle tone of voice with your child.
- Smiling and laughing with your child.

Choose a provider who will help your child behave without hitting, slapping, yanking, shouting, cussing, or scaring your child. She or he should **never** use punishment associated with rest, warmth, the toilet, or food. The provider should show and tell your child what to do. Saying, "Use the crayons on the paper" is more positive and better than saying, "Do not write on the table!"

Choose a provider who enjoys playing with and teaching your child.

Choose a provider who can fix healthy snacks and meals from food you buy.

Choose a provider who enjoys playing with and teaching your child.

Choose a provider who keeps your child clean and comfortable.

Choose a provider who knows how to care for your child in case of a sudden illness or an accident.

Choose a provider with good habits you would not mind if your child copied. She or he should not smoke, drink, or date when working for you. A provider should be at least 18 years old.

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Suggested Readings:

- Child Care Aware Packet. To receive this information, contact your county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office or DHS office. These offices are often located in the county courthouse.

- *For Parents' Sake, Tips for Parents. A Survival Kit for Parents and Kids: Vol. II.* (This is available from the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Child Health and Guidance Service.)

Choose a provider who understands and loves your child.

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References:

- Kontos, S. et al., *Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1995.

- *Training for In-Home Caregivers*, unpublished manual. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Office of Child Care, 1995.

Other publications in the Beginning Child Care Series:

- Before Your Child's First Day (CCA-125)
- First Day Tips (CCA-126)
- Introducing Your Child to the Child Care Provider (CCA-127)
- Helping Your Child Adjust to Child Care (CCA-128)
- When Friends or Relatives Care for Your Child (CCA-130)

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Child Care Aware

Oklahoma State University

When Friends or Relatives Care for Your Child

Be sure your friend or relative really wants to care for your child. Studies show that a relative or friend may watch your child just to help you. They may not know about good child care. They may not know how to keep your child safe. When you are counting on them for child care, at the last minute they may find something they would rather do. They might cause you to miss work.

They should always be with your child and not entertain other people without your permission. They should not smoke, drink, or date while they are with your child.

Telling a friend how to better care for your child can be hard to do. Sometimes a friend or relative will think she or he knows what is best for your child, even when you want something done differently. Be ready to talk about these differences in a calm way. Consider if a licensed family child care home or center would better meet your needs.

Choose a friend or relative with positive qualities to care for your child.

Choose a friend or relative with the same good qualities that you would look for in any other kind of child care. They must:

- Be able to read, write, and follow your directions.
- Never hit, slap, yank, cuss, scare, or tickle your child.
- Fix healthy snacks and meals from food you buy.
- Enjoy playing with and teaching your child.
- Keep your child clean and comfortable.
- Care for your child in case of sudden illness or accident.

CCA-130

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- Child Care Aware Packet.
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- *For Parents' Sake, Tips for Parents. A Survival Kit for Parents and Kids, Vol. II.* (This is available from the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Child Health and Guidance Service.)

References:

- Kontos, S. et al., *Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1995.

- Mitchell, A. et al., *Child Care Choices, Consumer Education and Low-Income Families*, New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, School of Public Health, Columbia University, 1992.

- *Child Care Consumer Education: Providing Critical Information to Low-Income Parents*, National Center for Children in Poverty, Child Care Consumer Education Issue Brief, 1993.

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